

GOOD-NIGHT.

Dearest, good-night! The darkness spreads her wings
Over the restlessness of human things,
And stills awhile the tumult of the day.

We were together not two hours ago,
Playing our parts before the world's great show,
Saying the words set down for us to say.

Yet are we nearer now than we have been,
Through the long streets lit silently between,
Though all the world should stretch between us two.

Think of me, dearest, not as I was then—
That was a worldly woman among men,
That is a lonely woman who loves you.

BELOW THE SALT.

CHAPTER I.

The Vicar's wife had been ill and was ordered away by her doctor.

With some reluctance, Mrs. Keston consented to visit her husband's sister in the South, whither the Farrington family fled each winter from the bleak winds and sea fogs of Lylteton-Leas.

The sisters-in-law had nothing in common but warm lungs and a great love for the Rev. James Keston—Miss Mrs. Farrington's fashion of showing her sisterly tenderness was open to certain criticism.

"Well, I'm glad," her hostess announced the morning after Mrs. Keston's arrival, "very glad you've discovered at last that you can leave your home for a few weeks without dire disaster."

This touched an old bone of contention. "Nothing," would have induced me to leave him," said the Vicar's wife, "if it weren't for Anne Carter's being there."

"Oh, you like your new servant?" "She's a priceless treasure," I never left home in my life before with any mind."

"She must be about fifty now."

"Who?"

"Anne. She was parlormaid, you know, at the old place in Suffolk when I was a child."

"So James said. I'd forgotten you ever saw her."

"She used to be curiously handsome."

"She's simply one of the most distinguished-looking women I have ever known."

"Very tall and slight, and dresses in an unvarying black habit, that somehow makes one think of a Mother Superior. Then her grave, beautiful face."

"Remember she had a fine peasant coloring."

"Well, she's like a creature cut out of ivory now, and has masses of silver hair parted in the middle, which, by-the-way, she refuses to cover up with a cap."

"Not at all—it's because a cap is a badge of servitude."

"And you give in to such nonsense?"

"My dear, you'd give in to more than that for such a creature."

"No, I wouldn't put up with airs. I wouldn't have a servant of mine mistaken for a member of the family."

Mrs. Keston smiled.

"Have you heard that what happens at the Vicarage?"

"Yes."

"I'm not surprised. She has the manners and the instincts of a gentleman."

"You don't believe me?"

"I believe you think so."

"Well, when you see her again you'll get that air."

"No, I shall remember that she's a servant of the servant class, and—"

"And you'll be even more surprised than we were at her behavior."

"Well, I dare say I'd find it easier to have faith in the excellence of my servants' hearts than in their grammar."

"Anne speaks like a person of education."

"I suppose it comes partly from her refusing to associate with persons of her own class, and partly from reading Milton and the Bible."

"Milton?"

"I admit," Mrs. Keston spread her hands apologetically—"I admit, that in those first days, when I came across her reading 'Paradise Lost' over her tea, I had my doubts as to her practical usefulness."

"I shouldn't have had doubts," Mrs. Farrington was emphatic.

"James said it was an unworthy prejudice."

"Of course, that's part of James's broad-mindedness."

"That the poor woman liked good literature was no reason she couldn't sweep a room."

"I should have been afraid it would be a reason for leaving dust in the corners."

"No, she was in the right. James was right. But he saw her when he offered to lend her some light reading for winter evenings."

"Did she ask for Shakespeare?"

"No, she disapproves of plays. She thanked James in that beautiful quiet way of hers, and said she was some years since she had read Fox's 'Book of Martyrs' or the 'History of the Reformation,' and she would be obliged."

Mrs. Farrington interrupted.

"Mrs. Keston's rather solemn face relaxed."

"We hadn't any martyrs in the house," she went on, "and James had to lend her his precious marked and annotated old 'Aurelian' that the Bishop had given him when he was a boy."

"James is absurd."

The Vicar's wife drew herself up.

"James is perfectly right and perfectly consistent. Anne hadn't been with three weeks and she saw her was the living justification of his theories."

"Oh, yes, I know. 'All alike in the sight of God'—and that kind of thing."

"That's the sort of person to show up the fundamental absurdity of the old-fashioned relation between master and servant. The former state is medieval and outworn. It's only a poor, vulgar, infernal, infernal, infernal state of absolute and impregnable."

The moment a subordinate becomes a self-respecting being, with the knowledge that he has a soul as precious in the eyes of the Lord as the soul of any other man."

"The absurdity of the old relation"—Mrs. Farrington took the words out of her sister-in-law's mouth—"the absurdity of the old relation is forced on the least liberal-minded. How well you got James by the throat."

Mrs. Keston flushed faintly.

"But so have I," Mrs. Farrington pursued airily.

"Let's see it goes on. 'How can a society that calls itself Christian be the sort of person to show up the fundamental absurdity of the old-fashioned relation between master and servant. The former state is medieval and outworn. It's only a poor, vulgar, infernal, infernal, infernal state of absolute and impregnable.'"

"And so you are, my dear. And so am I. I don't hold these theories."

"You are a good man, my dear. And so am I. I don't hold these theories."

"Ally—So, I understand, is the Bishop."

The Vicar's wife bent over her work. How had James Keston happened to have such a sister? But because it had "happened," she said, "I have no master but God, she said. 'Eh? What?'"

Father Hogan gasped. "Oh, then just say I called." He declares that, as he went down the steps, he heard the woman say, 'Aye, many a time, but few are chosen.'"

"That's one of Father Hogan's embellishments. But you seem to hear a good deal of what goes on at Lylteton-Leas."

"Oh—A—I have a letter from Miss Cardew now and then."

"See! Then there's not much left for me to tell."

"Yes, there is. I want to know about the Three Musketeers."

"The Three Musketeers?"

"Your three smart young men."

"I haven't got any smart young men."

"Now, now! Who are the three knights who come to see you every Sunday afternoon?"

"I don't know. I don't know quite well Sunday and I drive over to Lylteton-Leas every Sunday afternoon—unless one of us is ill."

"Exactly; and when you are ill, James goes off alone to hold his afternoon service, and you stay at home and receive the Three Musketeers."

"You're dreaming," Mrs. Cardew's out of her mind if she says—Oh! Mrs. Keston leaned back her head and laughed. "She means Anne's sons."

"What?"

"Oh, dear, Mrs. Farrington remonstrated, "from Jane Cardew's description."

"Oh, yes, they're a great credit to Anne. Two of them have something to do with the railroad, and one's in a counting-house at Bodley, where the three live together."

"And come all that distance to spend Sunday afternoon with me?"

"Yes, they're devoted to her."

"Humph! Mrs. Farrington seemed to con-

sider this an excuse filial piety in persons of their class. "I fancy," she went on in a moment, "that it's not Jane Cardew, after all, but you, my dear, who foster the popular superstition."

"What superstition?"

"That Anne is some great lady working out a penance."

"What nonsense! It is only because people can't get rid of the feudal idea that there's something radically degrading in service."

"I know that," Anne Carter said indignantly, "but the servant class, but that doesn't prevent her having the nature as well as the air of a gentleman."

"Well, mark my words!" Mrs. Farrington stood up, as was her wont, to emphasize her final dictum. "You'll be disappointed if you expect Anne to live up to any such standard. It isn't in her blood."

"How do you know she hasn't more virtue in her blood than we?" Mrs. Keston spoke excitedly.

"Virtue may have, but servility, too, and 'servant' proclivities—just as we have the natural tendencies of the dominant class."

"But I do know that you can't wipe out the habit of generations by a little education. Just wait! Before you've done with her, Anne will vindicate the servant soul you say she hasn't got."

CHAPTER II.

During the ten years that followed when the Farringtons came back to their summer haunts near Lylteton-Leas, the Vicar's wife used sometimes to recall to the Vicar's sister their first encounter about Anne Carter. And never without triumphant commentary on the interesting years that had passed since that time.

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"Perhaps—just to be on the safe side." Anne drew herself up a little on one elbow, and pulled out a long envelope from under the pillow. "If you understand such things," she said dubiously, "I've got some news about the train might be delayed." She dropped back on the pillow.

The Vicar unfolded the paper.

"Your will?"

"Could you read it out?" she said, in a whisper.

"Certainly." The Vicar cleared his throat. "I, Anne Carter, being of sound mind—this was drawn up by a lawyer."

"What a splendid idea! This is a copy. Names changed, and—your will?" she propped herself up again, and leaned over the small table at the bedside.

"Anything I can give you?" said the Vicar.

"No, if you don't mind reading." She poured out a powerful medicine, and swallowed it impassively.

The Vicar read on. The document devised and bequeathed her husband's little farm to her "four sons and their heirs."

"You mean three, don't you?" the Vicar interrupted himself.

"No, four. They will all be here to-morrow."

"Just lay back on your pillow, but if she was in pain, her face kept the secret. 'I must tell you,' she whispered. 'My husband and I worked and saved in spite of bad luck, and gave the three eldest what schooling we could. When my husband died, I had to go to work. I couldn't have carried on the farm without the boys, so I let it.' (She stopped and panted a moment.) 'But we couldn't manage little David's schooling unless I went back into service.'"

"I mean," she said, "I mean